

D&D Fiction

Devilish Deeds

by Matthew Sernett



Kazarzikal stood still with his fingers laced before his craggy face, his thumbs against the bridge of his long, sharp nose. The tips of his clawlike thumbnails rested lightly on his scabrous eyelids, and he held his elbows together before his brawny, green-skinned chest. With his head bowed toward his hands, an innocent onlooker might think the barbed devil was praying, but Blexilpet knew better. Blexilpet was no innocent at all but a devil itself, albeit a weak one. It knew its master's posture was one of deep thought and concentration. To interrupt Kazarzikal now would be nothing less than suicide -- which was exactly why Blexilpet had invited the barghest chief in to see Kazarzikal early. *Of course, the stupid beast is late, so my master won't kill it as I'd planned,* Blexilpet thought. *I hope my master hasn't figured out that I was up to something. Stupid barghest,* the imp thought and gave its barbed tail an irritated flick, sending a dollop of poison down from its perch on the lintel to spatter on the floor.

Swiftly glancing from it to Kazarzikal, Blexilpet sought some sign that its master had been disturbed by the noise. But no, the barbed devil was still plotting, his catlike eyes twitching and shifting beneath their lids like a sleeper's in a dream. Blexilpet stretched its wings and shifted its footing. Then, clasping the lintel in its feet and two clawed hands, it swung its ugly head down and flipped its wiry body so that it looked out in the hall, hanging from the doorway like a bat.

Blexilpet started and lost its grip when it saw the barghest waiting patiently in the hallway. With a couple of awkward flaps, the imp righted itself as it fell and landed with a quiet *thwap* on its rump. It looked quickly into the room behind it to see Kazarzikal rubbing his scaled hands down his thorny face.



"Stealthy, perceptive, quick-witted, and respectful of his betters. Admirable. These are qualities you should foster in our allies, Blexilpet," said Kazarzikal as he turned and folded his arms across his chest. "And qualities I expect from my minions."

Blexilpet didn't need to see Kazarzikal's narrowed eyes to understand the implied threat. Beating a hasty retreat from the room, it flapped past the smirking barghest and rounded the corner of the hall cursing itself for not better deceiving the goblin-fiend. When the imp thought it had flapped far enough, Blexilpet landed and turned invisible. Then it crept quietly back down the hall and into the room.

Kazarzikal saw it but of course gave no sign to the barghest leader. It was all part of the plan.

That was foolish, Blexilpet, the barbed devil said in the thought-speech of fiends. *I do not suffer fools.*

You are right, great Kazarzikal, Blexilpet thought back hurriedly. *It has been so long since I have seen blood spilt, and I am weak. Please give me another chance!*

Somehow the devil's thought-voice was more terrible than the audible one he was using to converse with the barghest. Kazarzikal's thoughts came to Blexilpet laden with implications even as the barbed devil spoke to the barghest -- a thousand whispered nightmares and horrific visions too fleeting and terrible to grasp filled the imp's mind courtesy of its master.

You are indeed weak little one, Kazarzikal thought, and had I not surmised your intentions when I sent you to fetch the pack lord for this meeting, I might have killed him as you wished me to. That would have inconvenienced me, and then I'd have to kill you, which would have inconvenienced me even more.

Kazarzikal's thoughts came to the invisible Blexilpet even as the barbed devil and the barghest gazed over a map of the area. Kazarzikal seemed even to Blexilpet's perceptive eye to be wholly engrossed in his talk of strategy with the pack lord.

Thank you, master. Oh thank you! Blexilpet bowed invisibly, humbled and elated at once. It would be an important part of its master's plan!



So, its master had guessed what Blexilpet was going to do, and he knew that the imp would fail. That gave Blexilpet new respect for its master. *But then again,* thought Blexilpet to itself, *maybe he wanted me to try to lure the barghest in early and to fail so that I would have more respect, which means he manipulated me into wanting to . . .*

Blexilpet's invisible eyes widened at that thought. Kazarzikal was truly its master, and the imp had much to learn.

Blexilpet watched quietly as the barbed devil and barghest discussed the barghest's plan to take captives from a nearby village. It struck Blexilpet that the barghest had no concept of Kazarzikal's abilities.

The barghest was a fiend in its own right, a shapechanging goblin-wolf born of a line of such beings from the Bleak Eternity of Gehenna. Yet Blexilpet knew that this one had lived his entire life on the Material Plane. As the barghest spoke in his goblin form, it seemed to Blexilpet that he had never seemed so weak and foolish as he did now while standing next to Kazarzikal. Kazarzikal stood twice as tall, and his muscular form was nearly twice as broad. The barghest wore leather armor, but Kazarzikal was better protected due to his spike-covered, iron-hard skin. The barbed devil seemed to give the barghest respect and to consider his counsel carefully, but Blexilpet knew it for an act. Kazarzikal respected none but himself, and when he gained complete control of the Hellspike, he would no longer have any need for the barghests. Blexilpet eagerly anticipated that day, and the imp nearly clapped its hands in glee at the thought of stinging the barghest pack lord with its poisoned tail again and again.

Yet first Kazarzikal needed to retrieve the *eye of Erramu*, the item that held the secret to the location of the missing piece of the Hellspike. Blexilpet shuddered at the memory of its attempt to retrieve the magic item earlier. The imp had gone to the cavern of the eye's keeper and had laughed as it flew invisibly past the keeper's guardians. Yet when Blexilpet had rounded the corner, its invisibility had failed, and the imp's sense of mirth had vanished almost instantly after it had realized that it could be seen by the many baleful eyes of the floating keeper. Seeing that the keeper had a mouth large enough to swallow it whole, and hearing the stirrings of the guardians, Blexilpet had fled.

Ah, master, you knew quickly what we now face once I described it to you, the imp almost chortled to itself. To use the Hellspike to open a permanent gate to the Nine Hells, they needed to have the missing piece, and to attain that, Kazarzikal needed help in defeating the *eye of Erramu's* guardians and its keeper. To that end,

Kazarzikal had enlisted the aid of the barghest pack, dubbing them the Hellstrike Legion. Blexilpet rolled its eyes at the memory of how the stupid beasts had swelled with pride at the title. *There aren't enough of them to make up a proper squad let alone a legion worthy of hell! Idiots. Too bad my plan to get this barghest killed didn't work, but perhaps another one will come to mind*, the imp thought. *Maybe I can kill the leader when he and his equally stupid "legion" go after the captives. Or maybe I'll get him after they come back? After all, once my master has the captives he needs for the sacrifice to the broken Hellspike, he can open a gate to hell long enough to pull through the powerful allies he requires. After that, who needs barghests? As long as these stupid beasts don't fail the task --*

"Thank you, Pack Lord," Kazarzikal said, drawing Blexilpet's attention back to the conversation. "Once a permanent link with my plane is established," his master continued, "taking command of the surrounding territory will be laughably easy. You and your pack will feast like never before, and I shall reward you with power you've never dreamt of."

The barghest bowed and left, pausing only slightly at the door to inhale deeply though his noise before stalking out.

Blexilpet, you will now follow the barghests as we discussed, thought Kazarzikal as he adopted his previous posture of deep thought. *The barghests will attack a nearby village two nights from now. They are to bring back at least two dozen captives. Make certain they don't kill too many, and be sure that they leave no witnesses. Remain invisible unless they are in danger of failing their mission. I don't want them to think that I don't trust them. Oh, and Blexilpet, don't get too close to any of them. They can smell you.*

Yes, master. I shall do all as you desire, Blexilpet thought back as it flapped its wings and sped after the departing pack lord. *Of course*, thought the imp to itself, *humans are sometimes quite powerful and devious. The pack lord should take care not to be off on his own. Some human might poison him. . . .*

New Magic Item: Eye of Erramu

The *eye of Erramu* shows whoever holds it a perfect prerecorded vision of another location, sufficient for the observer to count as very familiar with the location for the purpose of a *teleport* spell. The eye can hold up to ten such scenes, though when first found it often contains only one.

Lore: The *eye of Erramu* is said be the actual crystallized eye of a demigod who was renowned for her prodigious travel (Knowledge [arcana] DC 30). Anyone looking into the eye can use it as a teleport guide -- the stone holds images of up to ten locations (Knowledge [arcana] DC 35).

Description: The fist-sized crystal looks like a large glass eye. When picked up and looked into, the *eye of Erramu* blinks and glows with sky-blue clarity (shedding light equivalent to a candle).

Activation: Merely looking into the *eye of Erramu* (a swift action) activates its effect. Each time the holder blinks, the eye reveals the next of its stored scenes, if any. To add a new scene, the user must bring the crystal to the location to be recorded, then hold it up while speaking the command "See and remember, Erramu." To delete a scene, the observer looks at stored scene and speaks the command "Forget, Erramu."

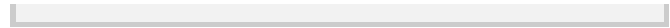
Effect: The eye reveals a prerecorded vision of another location, allowing the observer to teleport there safely.

Aura/Caster Level: Faint divination. CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *arcane* eye, 18,000 gp, 1,440 XP, 36 days.

Weight: 1/2 lb.

Price: 36,000 gp.



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